


**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT
FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS**

DIVERSE LEARNEERS

**SEGMENT #3: WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE
SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**



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The Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute

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Professional Development Toolkit for New and Beginning Teachers



The PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS is a research-based video streamed program with accompanying resource documents. The program is an outgrowth of a previous Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) online mentoring study at Virginia Commonwealth University. The findings of the online mentoring study revealed twelve topics new and beginning teachers felt additional university training would have led them to more effective use of best practices in the classroom. In this program, each of the twelve topics is presented in two to six stand alone video segments. The total number of segments is forty five. Suggested uses, in addition to personal viewing by K-12 teachers for self improvement, include professional development, mentor and mentee, university prospective teacher, and small or large group training.

The facilitators are university faculty and practitioners with field experience. Each is currently involved in teacher training or serves as a staff development administrator. All are currently engaged in educational research, teaching and/or educational policy development.

The teachers in the video programs are classroom teachers. Some of them were participants in the 2006 Online Mentoring Study in which the topics for this project were identified. They represent all disciplines in K-12 grades.

Resource documents for the programs are provided as PDF files to facilitate the use of the 45 video segments. The first set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) an introduction to program facilitators, including a definition of each topic, and a list of the video segments, and (3) a research formative study summary that helped to guide the project's development. The second set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) a full text transcript for each video segment, (3) a set of problems and solutions related to each video segment in the form of a work-study guide, and (4) an annotated bibliographic summary of references and Internet links for each transcript. Many of the organizations and agencies referenced in the transcripts are actively involved in the development of video and professional development presentations that support policy and advocacy.

Every reasonable effort is made to present current and accurate information. Internet content, however, does appear, disappear and change over time. CEPI, as a university-based educational policy research institute endorses no specific position of any listed group.

DIVERSE LEARNERS

SEGMENT #3: WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT

Diverse Learners: Knowledge and understanding of exceptional students, their differences and the teaching approaches required to provide differentiated instruction.

Facilitator: Dr. [Joan Rhodes](#), Assistant Professor
Department of Teaching and Learning
School of Education
Virginia Commonwealth University

AUDIO	VIDEO
<p>The use of differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their approach according to educator, Tracey Hall. It requires teachers to present information to learners rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum. This learner-centered focus is essential for working with students who receive special education services.</p> <p>My name is Joan Rhodes. I am a professor in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. Today I would like to share best practices for working with the diverse learners in your classroom. In this segment we will specifically talk about classroom modifications and organizational structures you can use to support mainstreamed students and those that receive special education support.</p> <p>There are a variety of models for teaching students with special needs in the general education classroom. Students may receive instruction in a collaborative, inclusion model where a special educator supports the instruction of the regular educator or in a team-teaching model where the general educator and special educator share teaching responsibilities. Students may also be mainstreamed into the classroom and receive instruction from the general classroom educator only. Regardless of the model used for providing instruction, teaching students with special needs in the general education classroom benefits all students as they learn to interact in positive ways and work together toward classroom goals.</p> <p>The Council for Exceptional Children notes that it is imperative that sufficient consultation from special education professionals is provided to enable general education teachers to offer effective instruction. General educators must work from the student's Individual Education Plan, or IEP to address learning needs. The IEP outlines the services a student with disabilities will receive, where those services will be provided, and educational goals for the student. All teachers should</p>	<p>DR. RHODES</p>

review the IEP at the beginning of the school year to determine how individual student needs will be met. Throughout the school year teachers should refer back to the IEP for instructional guidance and to monitor student progress.

When instructing students with disabilities, teachers often need to provide additional opportunities for practice and reinforcement of concepts. Within the classroom, teachers can support learning by partnering students or using cooperative learning groups. Additionally, removing distractions from the instructional environment, using behavior charts, and asking students to restate directions and content information can provide learners with needed assistance.

Let's hear from our teachers about the instructional model and activities they use for supporting learners with special needs in the classroom

My name is Christina Stewart and I am a 6th grade Exceptional Education teacher at L. Douglas Wilder Middle School. This is my third year of teaching. The first thing I do with each of my students is read their IEP or Individualized Educational Plan to determine what accommodations they have that will assist them in their academics. After reviewing their IEP, I try to provide a classroom environment that will eliminate distractions and allow students to become well organized. In addition, I try to design my lesson plans to allow for good time management and transition periods. I build in short breaks and extra time for completion of work. The presentation of the material is very important. I keep in mind all of my students' needs and establish lessons that incorporate all learning styles. Lastly, I monitor student behavior on a daily basis.

CHRISTINA STEWART

My name is Gina Brooks. I teach English and reading in middle school. This is my third year teaching. Teachers must tap into all of their students learning styles by examining them holistically. This applies to special education as well as gifted education. For instance, teachers have to understand how their students learn and retain information on an individual basis. There are several types of learners in a classroom who learn at a different pace and have differentiated learning styles. Teachers must research different learning strategies, implement different methods of instruction, and plan activities that are both hands on and traditional. For example, if there are students in my classroom I know enjoy getting up and moving around the classroom, I have learned that it is a good idea to plan a lesson which allows them to move around as they learn. This may be achieved through an educational game or in a group activity. Likewise, if there is a student who has fallen behind in his or her studies and needs one-on-one attention during class time, partnering that child with a student who is more advanced and who knows the material has worked well for me.

GINA BROOKS

Clearly, novice teachers are very able to support the needs of all learners in their classrooms. Although students with special needs receive additional assistance through the special education program, the classroom teacher is obligated to provide the best instruction possible for each child in her classroom.

DR. RHODES

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Diverse Learners: Knowledge and understanding of exceptional students, their differences and the teaching approaches required to provide differentiated instruction.

Ask yourself: What do you use to meet the needs of diverse learners in your classroom? How do you differentiate tasks in your classroom?

Suggested use for this module:

1. **Analyze:**

Please select one of the scenarios below and problem-solve a list of possible solutions. Record your ideas in the space provided. Discuss these ideas with your other educators (mentor, colleagues, or other beginning teachers).

2. **View:**

Watch the corresponding video on this topic. How does this information change your ideas?

3. **Compare:**

Revisit the scenario selected. Next, review the section entitled, "Possible Solutions" comparing the ideas listed with your own list.

4. **Reflect:**

How will you apply this new information to your current or future classroom? What goal will you set to help you begin to change your practices? What support is needed to help you accomplish this goal?

5. **Apply:**

List the first step towards change below. Create a timeline for success and place deadlines in your personal planner as a reminder. How will you know when you have met your goals?

Scenarios 1 & 2: Diverse Learners

Scenario 1:

All the students in second grade have the same spelling list (List 3). After the pretest on Monday, the classroom teacher realizes that the list of words was not appropriate for most of the children in the class. Many students had already mastered the words and received a score of 100%. Other students were totally frustrated by the list and unable to spell any of the words. How could this teacher differentiate this task to be more appropriate for all of the students?

Scenario 2:

A middle-school teacher uses whole group instruction everyday to teach his students algebra. He feels uncertain about changing his routine for fear of behavior problems if he tries cooperative learning activities. What could he try to differentiate his learning format? Where should he begin?

Circle the scenario that you selected below:

Scenario 1

Scenario 2

Record a list of your own possible solutions here:

Summary & Goal Setting:

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their teaching approach and how they adjust and present the curriculum. Differentiation also requires thoughtful teacher presentation of the information to learners rather than expecting students to modify the curriculum. Consider student differences and incorporate techniques into your lessons while planning rather than waiting to modify the materials after the lesson has been created. Think about changing either your learning process and/or the student products which are generated to add variety to your lesson plans.

Begin by asking yourself the following questions:

- How will you structure the lesson to meet the needs of students you expect to have difficulties? What supports will you build into your lesson plan?

- How will you structure the lesson to meet the needs of students you know will master the concepts fairly quickly or already know the information presented in the lesson?
- What will you do to keep early finishers (individual students or groups) engaged in instruction?

It can sometimes feel overwhelming to try to differentiate everything in your classroom. Not everything needs to be adjusted or differentiated. Start small by incorporating one or two strategies which will improve your lessons. As you experience success, increase the options that you try with students.

1. Begin with what is essential for learning. What key elements are required for students to be successful with your lesson? 2. Next, consider adjusting the learning process or product within your lesson.

Consider the following options:

- Routines and Formats (Teacher uses a variety of formats during instruction including individual work, partner activities, small group instruction, cooperative learning activities, and whole class instruction)
- Type of Task (Incorporate more authentic and meaningful work assignments versus using worksheets or skill and drill reproducible)
- Stations or Centers (Allow students to rotate to different area of the room and complete problem-solving or hands-on tasks. Once routines have been established, begin working with small groups or conferencing with individual students)
- Create learning scenarios which require students to utilize real-life objects or apply content knowledge to solve everyday problems. Incorporate opportunities for students to research and investigate topics of interest.
- Use activities which are leveled or have different tiers or choices depending on student needs or interests (learning contracts are a helpful tool for managing choices).
- Give interest assessments which help you identify student academic and recreational interests and learning styles. Try to include different learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) into your lessons.
- Do you always assess students in the same way? Why not vary the type of assessment you use. Could students create a graphic organizer, write a letter, or complete a project to demonstrate the depth of their learning?
- Conduct diagnostic assessments to build student growth across time. For example, a reading or spelling inventory will ensure that all learners are in materials at the appropriate level (independent or instructional) rather than working at a frustration level.
- Are you relying too much on the same materials? Don't rely solely on the textbooks. Use literature or trade books, source documents, current events, websites, and songs to promote greater learning.

- Encourage more high-level thinking. Without proper planning, many beginning teachers rely on 'spur of the moment' questions or examples. Use Bloom's Taxonomy to generate questions which require more depth of thinking. Record a couple of questions and examples that students will relate to and place these on index cards next to your teaching location. Access this information periodically during the lesson to keep your expectations high.



ANNOTATED RESEARCH AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ❖ One of the most complex challenges in teacher education and professional development is preparing novices and mentor teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Increasing student diversity, coupled with an emphasis on standards and accountability, has dramatized the need to build expertise in differentiating curriculum and instruction for preservice and inservice teachers.

Brimrimijoin, Kay. & Alouf, James. (2003). *New dimensions for building expertise in mentoring and differentiation*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 472630)

- ❖ The model of differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their approach to teaching and adjusting the curriculum. It also requires presentation of information to learners rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum.

Hall, Tracey. (2002). *Differentiated instruction*. Retrieved September 22, 2007, from http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_diffinstruc.html

- ❖ Practices noted as central to differentiation have been validated in the effective teaching research conducted from the mid 1980s to the present. These practices include effective management procedures, grouping students for instruction, and engaging learners.

Hall, Tracey. (2002). *Differentiated instruction*. Retrieved September 22, 2007, from http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_diffinstruc.html

- ❖ Key elements guide differentiation in the education environment: Content (what a teacher plans to teach), Process (how a teacher plans instruction), and Products (teacher assessment of content).

Differentiated instruction at Memorial Middle School. (n.d.). Retrieved September 22, 2007, from <http://beverlyschools.org/memorial/di/diinfo.htm>

- ❖ Teachers who differentiate instruction focus on their role as coach or mentor, and give students as much responsibility for learning as they can handle. These teachers grow in their ability to (1) assess student readiness through a variety of means, (2) "read" and interpret student clues about learning needs and preferences, (3) create a variety of ways students can gather information and ideas, (4) develop varied ways students can explore and "own" ideas, and (5) present varied channels through which students can express and expand understanding.

The Role of the teacher in a differentiated classroom. (2007). Retrieved September 22, 2007, from <http://allafrica.com/stories/200710161050.html>

- ❖ Differentiating instruction is an essential tool for integrating technology into classroom activities.

Differentiating instruction. (2004). Retrieved September 22, 2007, from <http://members.shaw.ca/priscillatheroux/differentiatinglinks.html>

- ❖ In preparation for differentiation, the teacher diagnoses the difference in readiness, interests, and learning style of all students in the class, through use of a variety of performance indicators.

Differentiating instruction. (2004). Retrieved September 22, 2007, from
<http://members.shaw.ca/priscillatheroux/differentiatinglinks.html>

- ❖ The effect of teacher beliefs and perceptions influences the teacher's academic expectations of students with varying academic abilities.

Ehlers, Kristy. & Montgomery, Diane. (1999). *Teachers perceptions of curriculum modifications for students who are gifted.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED429750)

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